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# **RADICAL PSYCHIATRY and MOVEMENT GROUPS**

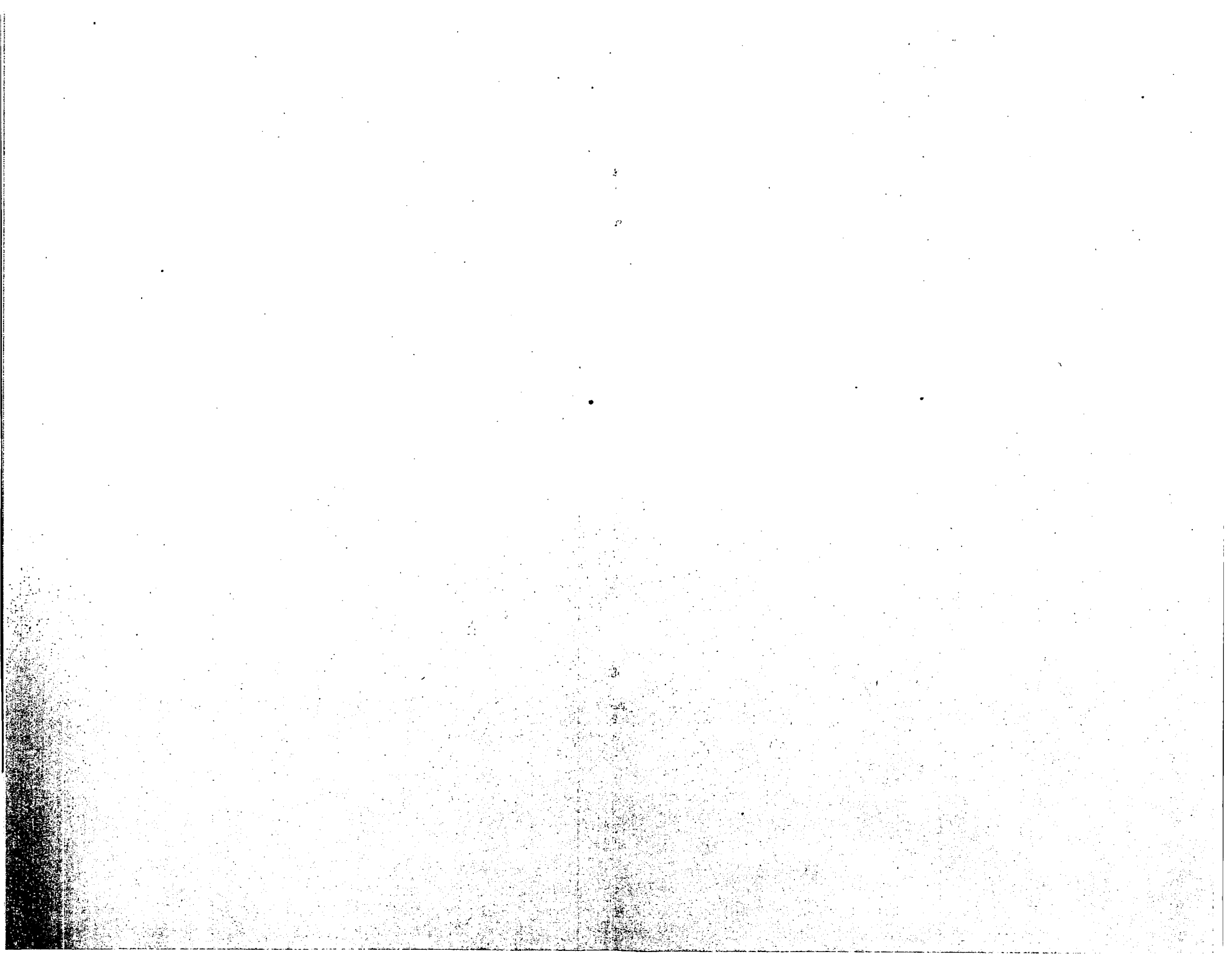
by Claude Steiner

*AND*

# **TRIBAL MODEL as REVOLUTIONARY ACTION MODEL**

With particular reference to the MASAI  
of AFRICA

by Howard Banon



age-mates are "brothers") of economic interdependence and of the ties of locality and neighborhood. Out of these shared ties and value comes the quality of being able to really "speak each others' language" and a commitment to talk, talk, talk. Every Masai elder may speak in council, most do. The meeting will continue until all feel they can agree-everyone recognizes that the appropriate decision has been made. If this requires two days they meet for two days. If they must meet again in a week's time they will. And so on.

At the Resistance we must recognize that a "sense of the meeting" will be a phony and imperfect substitute for consensus unless we commit ourselves to talk, talk, talk. As for shared values and bonds, much already exists. Our collective *rite de passage* does form a bond for many of us. Many of us have surely felt the impulse to call fellow resisters and resister-sisters "brother" or "sister". Though still mainly unspoken, I believe many of us share parallel orientations toward politics and interpersonal relationships. Those of us, like myself who are seeking to, in some sense, share our lives in Resistance co-ops with others in the movement may be helping to lay the secure foundations for the kinds of ties and gut-level understandings which will help to make "consensus" decision-making a realizable medium for organizing our collective struggle to build something true and, therefore, beautiful in the way of political community.

#### Conclusion

The tension that exists between the desire for "openness", "participatory democracy", playfulness, and the seriousness of our commitment and magnitude of our struggle are very real. To keep our New Left "thing" is, to me, as important as being "efficiently organized" or "effective". It is only our desire to see that ends continue to flow from means that offer us the chance to really achieve a different, more human life-style. These thoughts have been offered with the aspiration for such a life-style in mind. As we work, life, and struggle together I hope we can in some meaningful way come to love one another. In doing so we risk much. Not only the confrontation with prison but the physical violence we may increasingly encounter. Not only a personal challenge and apprehensiveness and fear, but the pain of being separated from "brothers" and "sisters" and feeling the pain of their pain. But this is a risk we must take. For this risk comes only from the willingness we have to really share with one another, to go beyond the corrosive, limiting individuality of an ego outside of community. To do "your own thing" and to do the "Resistance thing" will naturally grow together for many of us.

To put all this "jazz" down on paper about organization, etc. is necessary. But what it is really all about is how we must hang together, dig each other, laugh and cry together and fuck up and never quite get organized but do "the thing" each alone and all together. These thoughts are offered with the affection that grows from the new-found excitement, energy and wonder of being a member of this unfathomably beautiful bumbling-effective assortment of real people.

#### Introduction by Panther X

Here are two which deal with organization. They do so in a way that shows that organization is not so simple as common-sense.

What matters is the "nature" of the organizational structured & whether it allows the fullest of democracy, respect for the individual, creativity, initiative & personal & political empowerment.

These two writings offer another alternative to the "same ole shit." Read and critique your own group. Ask questions. Don't be afraid to try or experiment with the ideas provoked here.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

### Radical Psychiatry and Movement Groups

by Claude Steiner

Radical psychiatry's main goal is to help human beings overcome alienation. Because overcoming alienation requires contact with other human beings in groups it is important that radical psychiatry provide guidelines for the healthy functioning and survival of groups. When people who are interested in radical changes organize groups they quite naturally wish to organize them along lines which differ from the authoritarian and alienating basis on which oppressive, establishment groups are usually organized. As a consequence the structure of such groups is usually uncertain and indeterminate, and the cohesiveness of such groups against external attack is weak. There are two types of attacks upon movement groups which have become classic examples: one of them is the levelling of hierarchies; the other is the game 'Lefter Than Thou'.

#### *Lefter Than Thou*

It is a phenomenon completely familiar to everyone who has worked in a radical organization that in the course of events it happens that one or more people will attack the leadership by professing to be more revolutionary or more radical than the leadership. Since it is always possible that this is the actual state of affairs- namely that the leadership of the group has become counter-revolutionary, many an organization has been totally torn apart by this kind of argument; in many cases organizations that were doing true and valuable revolutionary work.

How is one to distinguish a situation in which a splinter group is for one reason or another simply attacking the leadership illegitimately, or whether such a group is in fact justified in its attacks?

I would like to cast the illegitimate attack of the leadership of a group by a

splinter group in the mould of a Bernean game. The game is called 'Lefter Than Thou'. The thesis of the game is that a group of people doing revolutionary work which has a certain amount of momentum always includes a sub-group of people with revolutionary aspirations but who are incapable of mustering either the energy or the courage to actually engage in such activities.

'Lefter Than Thou' players are persons who are dominated by an extremely intolerant and demanding conscience (or Parent) on the one hand and are not able to mobilize their sacred Child to do any work on the other. Criticism of the activities of the group and the decisions of the leaders becomes a substitute for revolutionary work. This criticism occurs, usually, at meetings where work would ordinarily be discussed, and it always replaces effective action. 'Lefter Than Thou' players are either effective in dismembering the organization and wind up without a context in which to work, or they are expelled from the organization by the effective leadership of it and find themselves again in a situation in which no work can be done. In both cases they have a clear-cut justification for their lack of activity, and this is the pay-off of the game.

It is a hallmark of 'Lefter Than Thou' players that they are angry, often 'Angrier Than Thou'; it is quite possible, however, to distinguish the anger of a 'Lefter Than Thou' player from the anger of a person who is effectively reacting to his oppression.

'Lefter Than Thou' players are most always children of the middle class. On this basis it is easy to see why a group of black militants can hardly be accused of playing 'Lefter Than Thou' while a group of white college students who accuse these black militants of not being radical enough is suspect.

Whether a person plays 'Lefter Than Thou' or not can be determined by making a simple assessment of how much revolutionary action he takes other than at meetings over, say, a period of a week. It will be seen that if observed closely, the activity of a 'Lefter Than Thou' player occurs mostly in the form of an intellectual 'head trip' at meetings and hardly ever in the real world. 'Lefter Than Thou' players will excel in destructive arguments or sporadic destructive action when sparked or impelled by others. But it will be seen that they lack the capacity to gather momentum in creative or building work and that they lack the capacity to work alone due to the extreme intransigence of the Pig Parent in their head which will defeat, before it is born, every positive, life-giving effort.

It appears, therefore, as if that extraordinarily divisive game 'Lefter Than Thou' is played by persons whose oppression has been largely oppression of the mind. This form of intellectual oppression, a Calvinist 'morality of the intellect', is usually accomplished in a liberal context in the absence of societal or familial application of force, a context in which action or force is actually disavowed so that the chains that bind the person are strictly psychological or within the head, yet most paralyzing indeed. When anger is felt it is not expressed physically but in the form of destructive talk.

Movement groups are especially vulnerable to destructive talk as their leaders are often in awe of and mystified by intellectual accomplishment. It must be remembered that a game has to be played by the Victim as well as the Persecutor. The Victim in this case being the leaders of the group under attack

## TRIBAL MODEL as REVOLUTIONARY ACTION MODEL

### With particular reference to the MASAI of AFRICA

By Howard Banow

#### 1. "Power Seekers" and "Responsibility Takers."

Power does tend to corrupt. The politicians of our nation are "power seekers". Our political system, despite the myth of democracy, is a bifurcated one made up of leaders and the led. Our leaders are men of limited integrity and/or misguided moralism and self-righteousness. Their proverbial willingness to compromise and to "reason together" does tend, as our political scientists never tire of telling us, to help our political system function. But we in the resistance movement are committed to repudiating that system, to finding a more humane and human way of ordering our collective existence. Therefore, we ought to understand that we are engaged in a political struggle which demands coordination and leadership. To speak of social change is to be ready to contemplate alternatives, alternatives which promise to both achieve our goals and to continually reaffirm our values by working toward these goals in a manner appropriate to who we are and what we hope to become. Simply, our leadership must be one comprised of "responsibility takers", not "power seekers".

At the Resistance office, I have for the first time seen I kind of participatory democracy which stands in stark contrast to the kind of politics we in the U.S. have been programmed to accept as natural. The reluctance to take a formal vote on issues, the "sense of the meeting" and the informal staff or steering committee meetings are the concrete manifestations of our "New Left mood". I dig it. We should retain it. But we ought to realize that the nature of the struggle confronting us is beginning to make demands upon us that require a more articulated organization. There is a non-bureaucratic model which seems to offer some hints to achieving this goal. It is provided by the political systems of traditional Black Africa. In particular, I will make reference to the Masai, the people with whom I am most familiar (having spent 14 months doing doctoral research amongst this pastoral people of Kenya and Tanzania).

#### 2. "Sense of the Meeting" and "Consensus"

Anyone who has studied pre-literate societies would see a striking similarity between the refusal to take formal votes and reliance on the "sense of the meeting" which permeates the Resistance and the "consensus" decision-making which characterized traditional African societies such as the Masai. The Masai elders' councils will discuss an issue until "everybody" agrees. There is no formal vote taken-there is (ordinarily) no need for one. But the consensus is and must be real. For the Masai to operate in this fashion a number of factors must be operative. First, there is a thoroughly shared, and deeply ingrained, set of values about the way decisions ought to be made, i.e. egalitarian-participatory as opposed to authoritarian-bureaucratic. Secondly, the ability to reach such a general consensus is based on the bonds of kinship and extended kinship (all

organization of which he's a member. Intimidation of group members by psychological means (pigging) must be avoided by developing an atmosphere of mutual protection between group members.

Responsive leaders are leaders that are available for criticism by group members. Thus leadership can be extended only as far as it remains possible for all group members to make extended face-to-face contact with the leaders.

Finally, a responsible leader is one who feels the impact of his or her actions and takes responsibility for them. This is a human quality which can only be assessed by observation. Responsibility is judged from the leader's previous actions and can only be ascertained over a period of time during which his or her work is open to scrutiny and during which the important quality of responsibility is observed.

The same kind of guilt that operates in the leadership when faced with 'laffer than thou' players comes into effect when confronted with a leveller.

The self-doubt of a leader is the greatest aid to the leveller. Oppressors don't respond to such attacks at all, but good leaders are prone, because of their basic wish to be responsive and responsible, to allow the attacks of a few to vitiate their useful work for the many. Thus, when faced with such attacks, leaders should responsibly investigate their work and responsively obtain feedback from all the group's members before abdicating their leadership, only if this analysis reinforces the levellers' argument should a leader allow that most precarious process, leveling, to occur in the group.

who, ordinarily, are more than willing to submit to the persecution of the 'Laffer Than Thou' player. This willingness to respond to 'head trips' and intellectual arguments is a characteristic of certain cultural subgroups, so that while a 'Laffer Than Thou' player would be scoffed at and ignored in a very clearly action oriented movement group, 'Laffer Than Thou' players have a capacity to affect the decisiveness of the guilt ridden intelligentsia.

This game is a liberal, intellectualized form of the aggressiveness that has been observed among the oppressed poor and the black. It is a well-documented fact that crimes against persons occur mostly between members of oppressed subcultures. Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* illustrates how the savage, homicidal and capricious criminality that has been observed among Algerians dissolved when the war of liberation became established. The supposed fact that Algerians are born criminals, taught even to Algerians by the faculty of Algiers, was not only not a fact but a mystification of their oppression. The actual fact of the matter is that the oppressed, when they have no access to their oppressors, either because their oppression is mystified or because their oppressors are not within reach, are likely to wind up at each other's throats. 'Laffer Than Thou' is a case of the frustrated and mystified oppressed seizing the throats of their brothers and sisters because of an incapacity to engage in positive, creative revolutionary action.

The measure of a revolutionary's worth is the work that she or he does. When a person questions the effectiveness of the leadership of a group or the work of a group, the first question to that person should be, 'What work art you doing?' It will be found that in most cases the critic is a person who is doing very little or no work. If that person is, in fact, contributing a great deal of work outside of the discussions at meetings, then the challenge of the validity of the leadership's goals and methods is again open to question. Thus, the demystification of a critic's actual work output is a very important tool in the maintenance of a cohesive movement group.

Another usual attack upon movement groups which is quite effective is 'levelling'.

### Levelling, hierarchies, and leadership

The greatest single evil in mankind is the oppression of human being by human being. Oppression ordinarily expresses itself in the form of hierarchical situations in which one person makes decisions for others. It has been the wish of many to eradicate this greatest of all evils from their lives. In order to do so some people have completely levelled hierarchical situations and have attempted to function socially in the total absence of leadership, in the hope of building a society without hierarchies in which the greatest evil, oppression, cannot find a breeding ground.

With the spectre of the worst pig, authorization hierarchy haunting them, people have attempted to work in organizations which have been levelled of all hierarchies. In my opinion such organizations, when they involve more than about eight persons, have an extremely low chance of survival. When 'levellers' enter an organization and impose willy-nilly a no-hierarchies principle they usually bring about the ultimate destruction of the group.

I will attempt to demonstrate the fallacy of levelling of hierarchies, and will attempt to present an alternative to levelling which I believe is capable of making rational use of the valuable qualities of leadership in people while preventing that extension of leadership into oppression which is such a scourge upon humankind.

First let me define some terms:

I will call *oppression* the domination by force or threats of force of one person by another.

I will call *levelling* a situation in which, at least publicly, no leader is recognized and no hierarchy is allowed in a group, even though leadership and hierarchy may in fact exist.

I will call a *hierarchy* a situation in which one human being makes decisions for other human beings.

I will call a *leader* a person in a group who is seen as possessing a skill or quality which causes others to wish to learn or profit from that quality.

Hierarchies come in a great variety of forms, from the murderous hierarchies in a capricious war to the mother-child hierarchy, including the hierarchies between teacher and student, man and woman, black and white, master and slave, factory owner and exploited worker, foreman and journeyman, craftsman and apprentice. Some of these hierarchies are alienating and dehumanizing. Others are not. To relate to all hierarchies as if they were all dehumanizing and evil is a great error, bordering on mindlessness. Hierarchies should be analysed in terms of whether they affect human beings well or badly.

There are at least three human hierarchies which are of obvious value to humankind and which clearly would not profit from being levelled.

The first and most basic hierarchy is the hierarchy between mother and child. Here one person makes decisions for another person and it is difficult to see how levelling this hierarchy would be of any advantage to humankind. When this mother-child or parent-child hierarchy is extended beyond its fruitful and natural reach, namely when it is imposed by force or threats of force and beyond the period in which the child needs parental protection and when it is extended to large aggregations of people, then this parent-child hierarchy becomes the model for the military, the great corporations and so on.

Another such is the hierarchy between a human being who is in great physical pain or need (the sick, the hungry, the wounded, the deranged) and another human being who has the means to fulfill that need. When a person is in dire physical need he may wish that another human being will make decisions for him. Again, this natural hierarchy which is conducive to well-being can be extended into one that is damaging as has been the case with the hierarchy that has been created by the medical profession and the attending psychiatric and other mental health professions. Again, the continuation of the need beyond necessity, the continuation of ministration beyond necessity, the encouragement

of the preservation of the hierarchy even in the absence of physical need, have resulted in a hierarchical medical establishment which at this point may be doing more against human health than for it. Thus may sound startling but if one separates medical knowledge which is vast and potentially helpful from medical activity which is self-serving and oppressive, one can see that the medical establishment is not only not fully serving humanity but holding back potential help from it.

A third hierarchy is based on differences of skill between human beings in which one person who can be considered a craftsman is sought out by another person who wishes to learn her craft. This hierarchy in which one person places himself below the other in knowledge is desirable to both. The apprentice, by recognizing his need to learn and by riveting his attention to his master, is likely to acquire a skill more quickly and more thoroughly than a student who questions the master's knowledge. On the other hand a teacher who is given the attention and recognition of an apprentice finds his teachings the greatest rewards for his life effort. Both the craftsman and the apprentice profit from this process, and it is hard to see how either of them, especially the student, is damaged by it. Again, this natural hierarchical situation can be extended beyond its necessity so that certain persons are forever kept in an inferior position to others with respect to their skills. This, of course, is the basis for most universities and professional schools and is again an example of where a natural hierarchy can be extended into an oppressive and evil one.

It is characteristic of humanizing hierarchies that they are first, voluntary; second, bent upon their own destruction or self-dissolving.

All three of the above mentioned beneficial hierarchies can be extended into oppressive ones. The tendency toward dehumanizing hierarchies that may exist in human beings can be overcome by human beings who decide that they wish to do so. That very same tendency can be empowered by the human intelligence, and has been, to the point of building monstrous hierarchies which may now consume us. As human beings we have the choice between mindlessly extending natural hierarchies to the point where they will devour us, or equally as mindlessly levelling and abolishing them, or using our intelligence, wherever it suits us, to create groups with humanizing, beneficial hierarchies when needed.

I wish to postulate an intelligent principle of authority which discriminates between hierarchy and oppression and which I hope will be useful to people working in movement organizations.

The first principle of human hierarchies is that they be voluntary and that they be self-dissolving, that is that the eventual historical outcome of the group's work be to make the hierarchy unnecessary.

The second principle of human hierarchies is that leaders shall be responsive and responsible.

In order for a hierarchy to be voluntary it cannot involve oppression or coercion by force or threats of force. As a consequence, no one shall use force or threats of force in any situation relating to human beings within a movement or an